



Program: South Carolina Seniors' Cube

Organization: South Carolina Lieutenant Governor's Office on Aging

Principles of Choices for Independence: Empowerment/Access to Information and Services and Evidence-Based Prevention

Description

The South Carolina Seniors' Cube is a nationally unique comprehensive and readily accessible statewide electronic database of the senior population's health care statistics and services integrating information from multiple data systems. The database provides a cross-sectional analysis of data from the state's all payer hospital system, Medicaid, Medicare acute and non-acute services, as well as Aging data, and Alzheimer's data. Eventually Medicaid waiver services and other agency data will be added. This quick query data analysis tool shows multiple relationship factors that effect outcomes and that allow for policy development and research in a wide area of programs, services and diseases that affect seniors. If you think of the Rubik's Cube, it is possible to visualize a three-dimensional health care database that can be accessed through the Internet by program staff and researchers to instantaneously sort through millions of pieces of data that relate to demographic and health statistics. It allows South Carolina to look for patterns of disease and illness that affect seniors and to look for disparities within different population groups. It allows South Carolina to examine a number of questions. The following are examples:

- 1) Is there such a thing as the stroke belt in South Carolina? What prevention steps can we undertake to reduce the impact of stroke on our senior population?
- 2) What is the cost of injuries for seniors by age for falls? Can the provision of minor home modifications, grab bars or exercise significantly reduce the incidence of falls and the resulting costs and loss of independence?
- 3) Can provision of home delivered meals or group meals reduce hospital or nursing home usage by seniors?

Through analysis of this data, South Carolina can examine the status of seniors' healthcare for the purpose of researching health care issues for implementing cost-effective strategies for maintaining the health and well-being of the senior population which would allow seniors to remain independent longer.

Through the assistance of the Office of Research and Statistics, multiple client databases from state agencies can be linked to medical data from hospitals and claims data from Medicaid and Medicare. An algorithm has been created to protect an individual's identity, yet allows for tracking health and human services utilization over multiple years. Funding has been provided through the Duke Endowment and has resulted in a partnership with the USC Arnold School of Public Health and the South Carolina State Budget and Control Board, Office of Research and Statistics. The Lieutenant Governor's Office on Aging utilizes a statewide steering committee of major universities, AARP, the South Carolina Hospital Association, the South Carolina State Budget and Control Board, Office of Research and Statistics and other related groups. It will maintain the effort through state funds, foundation grants and access/user fees in the future.

The South Carolina Seniors' Cube in conjunction with the Administration on Aging's Advanced Performance Outcomes Measurement Project has created an evidence-based research tool to research key aging health care issues and for advocacy purposes. Preliminary results from evidence-based research indicate that serving meals to seniors at least four times a week may reduce emergency department visits and inpatient hospitalizations. These home and community-based services will assist in delaying seniors going to nursing home facilities. This kind of evidence-based research convinced the South Carolina legislature to provide additional state funds for seniors on waiting lists for aging services. This effort resulted in the state appropriating \$2.9 million in new state funds for home and community-based services for seniors and providing \$200,000 in additional funding through the state's bingo tax program for home and community-based services in FY 2007-2008. The impact of these related efforts has the potential to save South Carolina and the nation's Medicaid and Medicare programs significant funding in the future.

The Lieutenant Governor's Office on Aging is tracking the impact of the new state funds to determine the impact on approximately 2,300 seniors on the state's waiting list to help further encourage the State legislature to provide additional funds to serve additional seniors identified on waiting lists. Other comparisons of home and community-based services will allow Area Agencies on Aging and others to provide seniors with the appropriate knowledge and information to make reasoned choices to reduce their risk of disease, disability, and injury which would allow them to remain independent longer. Evidence-based prevention and wellness initiatives have the potential to significantly enhance the lives of seniors and save Medicaid spending on the state level, as well as Medicaid and Medicare spending on the national level.

As the second year of the Duke Endowment grant is completed, the Office of Research and Statistics has finalized access and use protocols in order that South Carolina's major research institutions will have access to the South Carolina Seniors' Cube. South Carolina is on the threshold of significant advances, with partnerships with these institutions and other service delivery partners, in improving services through evidence-based tools such as the Seniors' Cube.

For more information about the South Carolina Seniors' Cube, please contact Bruce Bondo at 803-734-9870 or by email at Bondo@aging.sc.gov